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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 005322

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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (BSHUKAN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI PRIME MINISTER VISITS KINGDOM ON FIRST TRIP
ABROAD

REF: JEDDAH 449 AND 450

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Traveling on his first trip abroad as Prime Minister, Iraqi PM Nouri Al-Maliki visited Saudi Arabia July 1-2 seeking Saudi support for economic development, reconciliation, and improving security to stabilize Iraq. Saudi news sources reported that PM Maliki was received by the Crown Prince, and met with King Abdullah and other top officials. In a telephone interview with a Saudi correspondent, PM Maliki stated that the talks were positive and that Iraq shares many issues with the Kingdom, many of which pertain to security and the fight against terrorism. News sources quoted PM Maliki as stating that Iraq was counting on the SAG for assistance to restore its sovereignty. Other issues discussed included restoring diplomatic relations and opening the Saudi embassy in Baghdad.

¶2. (C) PM Maliki also asked the King to send representatives to the upcoming International Compact for Iraq meeting on reconstruction scheduled for mid-July. According to news reports, King Abdullah promised to consider the request, and also pledged his government's support of Iraqi political plans at the Arab and international levels.

¶3. (C) PM Maliki and Saudi officials also discussed security cooperation efforts to control the Saudi-Iraq border and prevent infiltration by foreign fighters. PM Maliki stated, "We want the ministers concerned to coordinate security between the brothers in the Kingdom and us." PM Maliki told the media that the handover of Saudi detainees was not discussed, but would be in the future.

¶4. (C) When asked about Iraq's relation with Iran, PM Maliki responded, "It is like any relationship with any state that seeks to establish good relations with Iraq, based on joint interests, mutual respect, and non-interference in Iraqi affairs. We welcome any state that seeks to deal with us on the basis of respecting Iraq and its borders and interests."

¶5. (C) Saudi media also reported that PM Maliki, accompanied by a delegation of Iraqi businessmen, met with Saudi businessmen and Jeddah Chamber of Commerce Acting Chairman Ziad Al-Bassam to encourage Saudi investment in Iraqi infrastructure projects. He pointed out that there were major investment opportunities in the oil, gas, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and service

industries, and reassured the businessmen that security problems are not in all of Iraq, but mainly confined to Baghdad.

16. (C) Comment: News reports on Maliki's visit track with many of the discussions during Ambassador Khalilzad's recent visit to the Kingdom (reftels). One of Post's informed sources on the Royal Family, Harb Al-Zuhayr (strictly protect), a prominent, Sunni businessman whose family hails from southern Iraq, confirmed the media reports. He told the DCM, "King Abdullah is ready to be supportive of PM Maliki." However, as FM Prince Saud al-Faisal has repeatedly told us, the SAG is unlikely to open an Embassy in Baghdad until it perceives that the security and political situation have stabilized. Additionally, SAG leaders will expect their Iraqi counterparts to be proactive and responsive on key issues such as border security and designating targeted sectors for financial and economic assistance. End Comment.
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